

Gray Wolf Chronology in Montana

1800

- Wolves are common throughout Montana.

1884

- Wolf-bounty law initiates Montanas official eradication effort.

1915

- Federal authorities begin wolf control in the West.

1925

- Wolf populations eliminated from most of the West.

1936

- Gray wolf believed extinct in Montana although wolves and wolf sign still occasionally observed.

1950

- Wolves still seen in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho occasionally but no self-sustaining breeding documented; wolves, likely dispersing from Canada, are killed in Montana and Idaho in every decade through 2000.

1973

- Montana protects wolves as state endangered species.

1974

- Wolves protected under federal Endangered Species Act of 1973.

1979

- A wolf is monitored in British Columbia, just north of Glacier National Park.

1980

- A lone wolf kills livestock near Big Sandy, Montana and is killed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This is Montana's first documented wolf depredation in more than 50 years.

1986

- A wolf den is confirmed in Glacier National Park. The Magic Pack establishes a territory in the North Fork Flathead River valley, in the western portion of Glacier National Park.
- A pack denned on the Blackfeet Reservation, but was not discovered until 1987 when they began to depredate on livestock.

1987

- Camas Pack established in the North Fork of the Flathead River valley in Glacier National Park.
- First livestock depredation occurs on the Blackfeet Reservation.

1990

- The U.S. Congress establishes a Wolf Management Committee to recommend wolf recovery strategies for Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho.

1991

- Congress directs the US Fish and Wildlife Service to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on wolf recovery in Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho.

1993

- An estimated 45 wolves in five packs occupy the federal Northwestern Montana Recovery Area. One pack establishes west of Helena, founded by a female wolf which dispersed from Canada.

1994

- Federal EIS on the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho completed. Wolves to be reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho for three to five years under the Endangered Species Acts experimental, non-essential rules that grant additional management flexibility. Wolf recovery is defined as 30 breeding pairs--an adult male and an adult female raising two or more pups to Dec. 31--in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming for three successive years.

1995

- Fifteen wolves from four packs captured in Canada are relocated to Yellowstone National Park and 17 individual wolves are released in central Idaho.

1996

- Yellowstone National Park receives 17 more wolves from Canada and 10 wolf pups from a depredating pack in northwestern Montana. Twenty wolves are released in central Idaho; 1st pups are born in the wild.

1999

- Governors of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming renew a 1997 Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate public involvement to pursue plans to manage a recovered wolf population in the northern Rockies and to assure a timely delisting.

2000

- Montana Governor Marc Racicot appoints 12 Montana citizens to the Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council. The council, chaired by rancher Chase Hibbard of Helena, is charged to advise Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks on wolf management in anticipation of the wolf's delisting.
- US Fish and Wildlife Service determines there are 30 breeding pair in the tri-state Rocky Mountain Recovery Area, marking 2000 as the first year of the three-year countdown to meet wolf population recovery goals.
- An estimated 97 wolves in 8 breeding pairs are counted in Montana.

2001

- Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council presents its Report to the Governor to Governor Judy Martz, who directs MFWP to draft wolf conservation and management planning document.
- Montana Legislature removes the gray wolf from Montana's list of predatory species once the wolf is delisted. Upon delisting, wolves will be legally reclassified in Montana as species in need of management. New law includes provisions for the defense of life and private property when a wolf is attacking, killing, or threatening to kill a person, or livestock.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Park's draft of the Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Planning Document is reviewed, amended and approved by the Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council.
- An estimated 35 breeding pair, in 51 packs, are counted in the tri-state Rocky Mountain Recovery Area, totaling about 550 wolves. The US Fish and Wildlife Service determines 2001 is second year of the three-year countdown to trigger an official proposal to delist the wolf.
- An estimated 123 wolves in 7 breeding pairs are counted in Montana.

2002

- Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Planning Document is released in January. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks begins to develop an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the state management of wolves. The public is invited to participate at community work sessions around the state and asked to identify issues and help develop management alternatives.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks develops draft EIS with five alternatives.
- An estimated 43 breeding pairs are counted in the tri-state Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Area, totaling about 663 wolves. The US Fish and Wildlife Service determines 2002 is the third year of the three-year countdown to trigger official proposal to delist the wolves.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces that the northern Rockies gray wolf population has achieved biological recovery under the federal Endangered Species Act.
- An estimated 183 wolves in 17 breeding pairs are counted in Montana.

2003

- Montana's EIS process includes a 60-day public comment period and statewide community work sessions. The final EIS recommends the adoption of the "updated council" alternative. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission approves the adoption of the preferred alternative – the Council's Update.
- State conservation and management plans completed by MT, ID, and WY and submitted to USFWS.
- States of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming request funding from Congress.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expected to begin the official administrative process of delisting gray wolves in the northern Rockies.
- An estimated 761 wolves in 51 breeding pairs are counted in the tri-state Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Area at the end of the year.
- An estimated 182 wolves in 10 breeding pairs are counted in Montana.

2004

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approves state management plans from Montana and Idaho and rejects Wyoming's plan. Delisting is officially delayed until the impasse is resolved.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission approve amending the Record of Decision to pave the way for interim state participation in northwest Montana through a limited cooperative agreement.
- In February, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service complete a cooperative agreement covering northwest Montana.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks receives federal funding and hires staff who begin implementing the state plan prior to delisting and in consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks begins close coordination with USDA Wildlife Services to investigate and resolve wolf-livestock conflicts.
- An estimated 835 wolves in 66 breeding pairs are counted in the tri-state Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Area at the end of the year.
- An estimated 153 wolves in 15 breeding pairs are counted in Montana.

2005

- Wolves in northwest Montana recovery area reclassified as "endangered" by court order.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service adopts more flexible regulations [known as 10(j) regulations] for the experimental population areas of Montana and Idaho.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service complete a cooperative agreement paving the way for Montana to assume independent and full responsibility for wolf management and conservation statewide. Montana begins implementing the state plan to the extent allowed by federal regulations throughout the state. Funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and through special Congressional appropriations fund Montana Fish, Wildlife & Park's wolf team.

- Montanans form a diverse working group of private citizens, non-governmental organizations, and state and federal agencies to begin developing the Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program. Work is ongoing.
- An estimated 256 wolves in 19 breeding pairs are counted in Montana.

2006

- Montana implements as much of approved state plan as possible and within federal guidelines.
- Funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and special Congressional appropriations continue.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and USDA Montana Wildlife Services update an existing interagency cooperative agreement to include gray wolves
- Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program draft framework completed and draft legislation is prepared for the 2007 Montana Legislature.
- An estimated 316 wolves in 21 breeding pairs are counted in Montana. Distribution continues to be the western one-third of Montana.

2007

- Montana implements as much of approved state plan as possible and within federal guidelines.
- Funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and special Congressional appropriations continue.
- HB 364 passed the 2007 Montana Legislature, creating the Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program; Oversight Board is appointed by the Governor and administrative officer of the Board is hired. First Board meeting, fundraising, and rule-making to begin early in 2008.
- MFWP proposes a tentative wolf hunting/trapping season structure proposal which is approved by the MFWP Commission, enabling the agency to gather public comment. (decision timeline is occurs in 2008).
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes modification of the Experimental Rules (10j) to provide additional flexibility to northern Rockies states with approved plans that applies to the experimental areas of those states, respectively.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approves Wyoming's wolf management plan and state laws.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes a Northern Rockies Distinct Population Segment and to delist wolves in the northern Rockies in states with approved plans.
- An estimated minimum of 422 wolves in 39 breeding pairs are counted in Montana. Distribution continues to be the western one-third of Montana.